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Behaviour changing campaigns: success and failure factors

Query

Please provide a synthesis of lessons learned from social campaigns which seek to promote value and behaviour change across society (e.g. public health, drink driving, domestic violence, etc) and that could be relevant to anti-corruption campaigns.

Purpose

We would appreciate reference to case studies of successful behaviour changing campaigns and the critical factors for success or failure. You could explore subjects beyond corruption, but they would need to have strong social relevance. We are looking for examples that mirror the major campaigns to change attitudes towards drink-driving and domestic violence in the UK in the 1980s.

Content

Summary

Corruption is multi-faceted and difficult to package into a single message. The topic is also culturally specific, with different manifestations in different countries and societies. It therefore presents a tough communication challenge.

At present, the number and quality of campaign evaluations in the area of societal value change, including those related to anti-corruption, is limited. It is clear however that some campaigns have been more successful than others. Lessons can be learned from community-level campaigns aimed to empower individuals, national campaigns focused on specific target groups and international campaigns requiring long-term, collective action. Case studies of campaigns with strong social relevance can highlight elements of a campaign that affect their impact. Critical success factors include understanding the target audience, generating a sense of community responsibility and increasing sense of agency. Issue framing is also important. Factors that can limit the impact of a campaign include the use of fear-based messaging, lack of authentic experience and voice, and the use of unclear messaging that can be misinterpreted.

1 Introduction to behaviour change

Effective behaviour change is notoriously difficult to initiate and sustain, even where communities are well informed about an issue and the risks involved (Panter-Brick et *al*, 2006). Individuals are often heavily influenced by broader socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental factors (Global HIV Prevention Working Group, 2008). In order to implement an effective campaign, it is necessary to understand these factors

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and the barriers that must be overcome before individuals and organisations will change their behaviour. A strong understanding of social norms and values is also necessary.

The factors influencing behaviour can be divided into three broad levels: personal, social and environmental. Personal factors are intrinsic to the individual. It includes their belief in their ability to change their behaviour. Social factors are the influence of other people on their behaviour. Environmental factors are those that individuals can't control such as the economy or technology. Each of these factors needs to be addressed to develop an effective campaign. Seeking to understand and influence behaviour by addressing one set of factors alone is unlikely to be effective (Budge et *al*, 2009).

Social norms exert a strong influence on people's attitudes and behaviour. They reflect real or perceived majority opinion and the behaviour that is considered normal in a given situation (CommGap, No date). Therefore, even in situations where behaviour change may be beneficial to an individual or organisation, prevailing attitudes of those around them may prevent them adopting the change.

2 Critical success factors

A 1998 World Bank report *Social Marketing Strategies to Fight Corruption* states that although "it is widely accepted that one of the most critical elements of a country's anti-corruption program is the involvement of civil society, there is less agreement on how such involvement can be encouraged" (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 1998). The reports suggests that lessons learned from public health campaigns, environmental campaigns or campaigns to protect individual/group rights can provide useful information regarding how to encourage greater involvement of civil society in an anti-corruption program.

The following section provides a series of case studies which demonstrate the effective implementation of campaigns at a local, national and international level. It suggests that successful campaigns should:

- be tailored to a specific audience
- generate a sense of community-wide responsibility
- use clear messages to increase human agency

Tailor the campaign to the audience

Use existing attitudes

A common barrier to behaviour change is information that conflicts with existing values and attitudes. Individuals or groups are less likely to scrutinise the content of a message that is consistent with what they already believe, or an attitude already held (Crawley, 2009).

> *Case study*: Research in Florida revealed that young people found existing anti-smoking campaigns too judgmental. They stated they would prefer to make their own decisions, based on factual information, rather than continually told that smoking was dangerous. The resultant 'Truth Campaign' therefore moved away from traditional health messages and focused on the industry as a whole. The campaign portrayed the tobacco industry as a powerful industry that spends millions of dollars on marketing to deceive young people into smoking. Buying and smoking cigarettes therefore meant young people were conforming to marketing tools. The 'Truth Campaign' significantly reduced levels of youth tobacco use and created positive changes in anti-tobacco attitudes and tobacco use susceptibility compared to other American states (Peattie and Peattie, 2008).

Make an issue publically accessible

Issues that are perceived as too technical, financial or scientific can often be often dismissed as they are too difficult to understand. This is particularly true for campaigns operating at an international level, involving long term, complex problems such as climate change. Uncertainty and scepticism regarding these topics can further add to the problem. Frames can be used to generate a shared understanding of an issue which can then form the basis of a campaign (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and redefine issues, previously seen as the private terrain of experts, into problems which require public and political action (Gready, 2004).

> *Case study*: The success of the 'Jubilee 2000' campaign is often attributed to the way it re-framed the debt issue. The campaign used the end of the millennium to generate a sense of urgency and need for change. It also reinterpreted complex issues surrounding the

international political economy, and developed simple concepts that were publicly accessible. Rather than economic policy, debt cancellation was linked to human rights and social justice. This alternative interpretation of the debt issue appealed to a much larger audience, many of whom had been previously uninterested or unaware of the issue.

Make an issue culturally specific

Campaign messages need to be relevant to the local community and resonate within culturally accepted norms and existing values.

> *Case Study*: Campaigns to address domestic violence in Armenia were first introduced following the announcement of large grant programs, such as those from USAID. Prior to this, there had been very little work conducted in this area. This caused the donor-led campaigns to be met with local suspicion. Communities initially resisted the campaigns, feeling the issue was being imported from western society. In order to address this problem, NGOs involved in the campaign redesigned their key messages to make them more culturally appropriate, relating the issue of domestic violence to culturally accepted pro-family terms and linked the issue to family life (Ishkanian, 2007).

Look at the issue from the target audiences' point of view

Campaigns should develop a targeted message geared towards a specific group which reflect typical behaviour and attitudes.

> *Case study*: In the evaluation of a recent drink driving campaign in the UK, research found that previous adverts had failed to resonate with the target group: males aged 17-29. It was found the group didn't identify with the target of the message: 'drunk-drivers'. Research identified a critical intervention point for campaign messages as the decision whether to have a second pint (see **Department for Transport**). The resultant 'Think! Drink Drive - Personal Consequences' campaign therefore focused on the desire for another drink, as well as a set of consequences relevant to the target group, for example such as getting a criminal record or damaging relationships. Six months after the launch of the campaign, young men's perception that they would be caught by the police had risen from 58 to 75 per cent (BMRB Tracking, 2008).

Generate community responsibility

Make an issue socially unacceptable

Demonstrating the impact of individual behaviour on other groups in society, in particular powerless groups can help make certain behaviour become socially unacceptable. This technique has been used in anti-speeding and anti-smoking campaigns.

> *Case Study*: An NCVO guide on campaign effectiveness highlights the progress made on the smoking ban in the US and the UK once greater attention was paid to the effects of passive smoking. *"This reconstruction of the debate helped to gain support from larger segment of society, as it transformed people's understanding of their interest in the issue. In the UK, this aspect of the debate has come to the fore more recently, with the rights of workers in bars and clubs highlighted as a rationale behind the recent smoking ban in public place"* (Coe and Kingham, 2007).

Highlight the wider impact

Campaigns that demonstrate the impact of an issue on society and the economy can be effective in empowering the community to act. This should be done using credible and accurate evidence, rather than through large sweeping statements.

> *Case Study*: As well as providing accurate information about AIDS and how it is transmitted, the highly successful HIV/AIDS campaigns in Uganda also emphasized the impact of AIDS on society such as the creation orphans and the impact on the economy in terms of loss of skilled workers (Kirkby, 2008).

Use of Shaming

A campaign message can be further strengthened if causal agents are identified, particularly if it is shown that an agent is intentionally causing the problem (Gerhards, 1995). Identifying a person or group responsible for a problem can provide a focus for a campaign. Massaro (1991) states that *"shaming serves*

a dual function by influencing the behaviour both of the person being shamed and of the community that witnesses the shaming". Shaming can work at the community level but also at an international level.

> *Case Study*: The *International Campaign to Ban Landmines* (ICBL) gained momentum once it began focusing on responsible actors and particular practices. By publicising the names of companies and states responsible for landmine production and use, the campaign effectively shamed companies into voluntarily ending their involvement in the landmine trade (Wexler, 2003).

Increase sense of agency

Develop sense of self-control

Increasing people's sense of control can cause people to take action against an issue which they previous felt they could do nothing about (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 1998). This can be achieved by shifting responsibility and identifying behaviour that can prevent an issue. This can empower people to take action and remove a sense of powerlessness.

> *Case Study*: The UK Home Office's vehicle crime campaign suggests that people can take action against car theft and decrease their vulnerability. The campaign's key message was 'Don't give them an easy ride' focused on action that could prevent theft and shifted responsibility onto the car owners. This approach was in great contrast to previous messages that used images of circling hyenas to play on people's fear of crime and lack of control (Budge et *al,* 2009).

Offer alternative behaviour

Behaviour change campaigns should clearly outline the alternative that is expected. Clear and consistent instructions should be used, presenting alternatives that are easy and realistic to implement (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 1998).

> *Case Study*: In Uganda clear and consistent messages such as "be faithful," "zero grazing," and "love carefully" were used by nearly all groups involved in the campaign. The use of consistent and clear messaging increased the extent to which they were picked up. The focus on prevention was also important, identifying an area in which action could be taken to fight such a large scale problem (Kirkby, 2008).

3 Critical failure factors

Collins et *al (*2003) state that "*learning from failures is potentially more instructive than success*". The following set of case studies suggest that the use of fear-based messages which are commonplace in health and drink-driving campaigns can often cause people to dismiss an issue. Messages produced in the wrong context can also be ineffective, perhaps acting to reinforce the precise behaviour or attitude a campaign is trying to address. Pre-testing is thus an essential element of campaign development.

Fear-based campaigns

Fear-based messages can be an effective tool in gaining public attention, however there is also a tendency for individuals to dismiss extreme situation as unlikely or too distant. This is common for health campaigns that warn of negative implications in the future.

A similar effect can be seen for messages that are too hard-hitting. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) found that their most hard-hitting campaigns were in many ways the least successful. Research regarding road safety found that individuals will dismiss distressing adverts as not personally relevant or lack in credibility (Stead et *al*, 2004).

> *Case study*: In 2009, the Advertising Standards Authority received 357 complaints regarding the 'Bedtime Story' advert. The advert was launched as part of the UK's Department for the Environment and Climate Change (DECC) Act on CO2 campaign. The advert was seen as unsuitable for children. In addition, it was suggested the advert used using inaccurate science (see **BBC News Story**).

No credible voice

Effective campaigns should be supported by authentic and credible evidence, in the form of personal experience or case studies. At present, coverage of certain issues can be characterised by sensational reporting and controversy.

Case study: Jacobs and Johnson state that South Africa's mainstream media coverage of HIV/AIDS has primarily focused on conflicts around policy, rather than engaging with real life experience. They suggest the absence of stories from individuals living with HIV/AIDS or voice from those immediately affected is having a devastating impact on public's knowledge about AIDS (Jacobs and Johnson, 2007).

Unintended consequences

There have been a number of cases where a campaign message has been misinterpreted. This often occurs when messages aim to suggest appropriate behaviour. Research in the US into approaches to reduce alcohol consumption found that certain messages could actually encourage those who drank less than the amount described to increase their consumption to the level presented as the norm (Schultz et *al*, 2007).

Case Study: A survey conducted to analyse the 'Winners' programme, a Californian programme to alter drinking behaviour, found that over a third of respondents thought that the adverts were promoting alcohol consumption (Wallack, 1982).

4 Anti-corruption campaigns

Developing an anti-corruption campaign presents a tough communication challenge. The topic is multi-faceted and therefore difficult to package it into a single message. Furthermore the issue is grounded in a country's social and cultural history, political and economic development and bureaucratic traditions and policies. Each culture has different perceptions and practices with respect to corruption—acceptance of what is reasonable and appropriate differs widely. Corruption is also not exclusively the fault of individuals meaning allocating responsibility and causal agents creates a problem.

To generate public support, an anti-corruption campaign must frame the issue in moral terms and demonstrate the impact on human life. Key messages should aim to make corrupt behaviour become unacceptable. A campaign should communicate the harm done by corruption; in particular the human consequences of corruption. It should also highlight the action that needs to be taken such as the proper procedures to report corrupt activities and specific individuals (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 1998).

As with other global campaigns, there might be a case for relying upon a set of issue-specific tactics, rather than the issue as a whole. At present the public often focuses on grand corruption. There is a need to package information in a case study format to highlight that corruption occurs not just at the grand, but also at the petty, everyday level (Byrne et *al,* 2009). It is also important that approaches are culturally and country specific.

The 1998 World Bank report makes a number of recommendations to improve campaign effectiveness. These include dividing the target audience into different segments. This is particularly important as the target audience of anti-corruptions campaign is very diverse. These segments can be identified in terms of sector e.g. include public servants in the judiciary, politicians, senior bureaucrats etc. or segments could also be based on attitudinal or psychographic measures. Within each segment, a clear understanding of their potential roles in contributing to corrupt practices and their attitudes to corruption should be determined (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 1998).

The report also suggests that prior to full-scale promotion, campaign designers should take care of a variety of practical considerations such as ensuring that programs are being developed with host governments, institutions, or agencies.

Finally, continual evaluation and feedback of a campaign's impact must be introduced. In particular, case studies of successful efforts to combat corruption should be documented so that they are memorable to intended audiences. They can provide an important instrument of empowerment and change (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 1998).

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